

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Speaking is considered to be the first priority for learners in language learning. It is strengthened by Lado (1961) cited in Fulcher (2003) who wrote “the ability to speak a foreign language is without doubt the most highly prized language skill, and rightly so.” Many language learners regard speaking skill as the measure of knowing a language. These learners define speaking as the skill to converse with others, much more than the skill to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They assume this skill as the most important one they can acquire since they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication.

Despite of its importance, speaking is regarded as the hardest skill to be mastered among the others like, reading, writing, or listening. Speaking is often viewed as the most challenging one compared to other skills (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Lazaraton, 2001; Nunan, 2003). Perhaps it happens because in speaking, the speaker must choose the ideas he or she wants to express at a given time as well as the linguistic forms appropriate to express them and the listener does not know exactly what will come next in the interaction. As put by Breen (1983), "Speaking is typified by a continually dynamic and relatively unpredictable relationship between meanings and their formal realizations, and between structures and the many possible functions which they may achieve."

For that reason, developing the learners' speaking skill, particularly in a foreign language context such as in Indonesia where English is still viewed as a foreign language, is not an easy task. There are some problems occur in developing this skill as Lazaraton (2001) points out that "the biggest challenges in the EFL classrooms are the lack of students' motivation and the use of the first language". In addition, there are two other studies that show some problems related to developing speaking skill in English. In a survey of EFL teachers, Nunan (1993) found the biggest challenges in the EFL speaking classroom are lack of motivation, getting students to speak, and the use of the first language. Andhi Wahyu Tri Jatmiko (2006) reveals that the students produced very little English. Most of the interaction was dominated by teacher talk, while learner talk was only 25% for the whole interaction. These studies imply that students have little opportunity to practice their target language.

To overcome problems of speaking mentioned above, there have been some effective and popular approaches that can be used by English language teachers. One of them is known as CBI (Content-based Instruction). As Swain (1985) support that in order to develop communicative competence, learners must also have the opportunity of using the new language productively, both orally and in writing. In line with this, scope to produce comprehensible and coherent output is constantly offered in CBI, as students are systematically pushed to produce language that is appropriate in terms of both language and content.

CBI is defined as "the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach language itself

separately from the content being taught” (Krahnke, 1987). This approach obviously provides some techniques and tasks that can help students to develop their speaking skill and give more opportunity to practice their target language such as information gap, jigsaw, role play, simulation, discussion, and problem solving (Brinton, 2003). Moreover, one of the principles of CBI which emphasizes the use of authentic materials providing real-world tasks will get students more motivated in learning the language.

In Indonesia, particularly in vocational schools, CBI gives big contribution to its teaching and learning process since it contains authentic speaking tasks centered around authentic materials that are needed by the students to prepare themselves to work in the real-world. One of CBI models found in vocational schools, particularly in Hotel classrooms is theme-based. The classrooms objective is in line with the theme-based aim that is to develop students’ communicative proficiency of English. As Brinton, Snow, Wesche (1985) point out that theme-based would constitute the weakest representation of CBI models which does has explicit language aims.

The researcher conducts this study in a vocational school since English is an important language in the field. As from the observation of two classes in two different schools; SMKN 57 Jakarta and SMK Jayawisata 2, it is found that after graduate, in the work field, students are expected to be able to communicate using English when they promote hotel facilities and services, help foreign tourists to check in and check out, give information about tour travel and shopping centre when they have foreign tourists as the guests of the hotel. Another reason is that

the government is running the program, called *SMK Bisa!* to promote and develop vocational schools. The government represented by Direktorat Pembinaan SMK has made some programs to improve teaching and learning process in vocational schools.

The reasons above and this fact lead the researcher to conduct this research to investigate more deeply on how theme-based model under Content-based Instruction works on improving students' speaking skill in Hotel classrooms.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background, this study will attempt to address the following main question:

- How does theme-based model work in Hotel classrooms of SMKN 57 Jakarta and SMK Jayawisata 2?

Sub questions as follows:

- How are learning activities implemented to develop the Hotel Management students' speaking skill?
- What learning materials do the teachers use to plan and implement their teaching in Hotel Management classrooms at SMKN 57 Jakarta and SMK Jayawisata 2?
- How do the teachers assess the students' speaking skill?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at investigating on how theme-based model works in SMKN 57 Jakarta and SMK Jayawisata 2. Specifically, this study is intended to describe the speaking activities under theme-based model in Hotel classrooms, learning materials used by teachers, and assessment of students' speaking skills.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is expected that the result of this study gives a real picture to the researcher and teachers about speaking activities under theme-based model conducted in Restaurant classrooms. The findings of this study may give insights to teachers about the learning activities, learning materials, and assessment that can be best used to develop the students' oral communicative competence. Moreover, the result of this study may provide the teachers with ideas and insights about their teaching strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of their teaching practices in the classroom.